

# atHome

## Top Design trends in the age of COVID



### Quick Guide and Featured Open Homes

Looking for a home? View comprehensive listings of local open houses taking place this weekend from all across the area.

### Coronavirus and 1031 Exchanges

If you were planning for a 1031 Exchange before the quarantine, your deadline may be changing.

### Colorado Economic Discussion: What We Know During COVID-19

Colorado economists discuss the current health crisis and its impact on our economy as well as the outlook for future recovery.



Custom built in storage hides the TV in this family room, helping to make it more multipurpose. (Photo: Rodwin Architecture)

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I'm writing this article from the same place you might be reading it - your make-shift home office. And whether it's a converted guest

bedroom or you took over the kitchen table, you've probably become painfully aware of how important a good space is for work. In the wake of the state's 'Shelter at Home' order, many of us have a new perspective on how

our home can support our lives (or not). Here are my top take-aways on how the pandemic will shift our thinking about our homes.

## 1. Home office

So let's start with that most critical and obvious space. Home offices have been an increasing trend and this moment may cement that as a "must have". Fortunately, they can be quite small, but they do typically need a door (for acoustic privacy) and decent lighting. Choosing the right location is critical; are you looking to stay connected or be isolated from the rest of the household?

## 2. Home investment

For the last decade construction costs have been going up roughly 10% per year. With the shutdown, we may see a temporary flattening of these increases as contractors are suddenly hungry for work for the first time in ten years. But when the brakes come off the economy later this year, it will likely trigger a wave of

deferred construction projects, so if you want to lock in a contractor's attention and better pricing, don't delay in getting your project started.

## 3. Acoustic insulation

Well built homes often have acoustic insulation (cotton or fiberglass) in the walls around bathrooms and bedrooms, and between floors of a home. It can make a huge difference in allowing multiple people to simultaneously use the home without driving each other nuts.

## 4. Home gym

While going for a bike ride or a jog around the neighborhood is great when the weather is nice, a home gym gives us the flexibility to work out anytime. Minimum typical size is that of a small bedroom, so in some cases it can come from space that you already have. Most importantly, make sure it's a space that you want to be in, otherwise all that fancy equipment is going to get really lonely.

## 5. Mother-in-law suite/ADU

Cities are relaxing rules for Accessory Dwelling Units, realizing that it is one of the most important tools for creating low-impact affordable housing, as well as increased cash flow and convenience for homeowners. During COVID, many families are suddenly having a multi-generational living experience. Maintaining privacy (with separate entrances and kitchens) by means of an ADU gives families greater flexibility and long-term social sustainability. Many of these ADU's are also being created with "Universal design" principals in mind (handicapped accessible entrances, 3 ft. wide doorways, roll-in showers, etc.) so that our aging parents might have someplace to live.

## 6. Separate TV/game area

Tired of hearing 'Call of Duty' explode in the background while hosting a Zoom call? Many households are creating kids TV/game areas that can be closed off. One way to do this without adding yet more square footage is to give the kids what might have

been your media room, and make your great room into the main TV space. "But we don't want the main social space to be visually dominated by a TV!" you protest. One solution is to disguise it with something like the Samsung Frame TV, which looks like framed art when not in use. Or, if you nest your TV into built-in casework, it tends to look discrete and integrated into the decor.

## 7. Food storage

COVID created a newfound anxiety in many households about possible food shortages, so some are increasing the size of pantries and adding auxiliary fridges and freezers. Fridges use more electricity than any other appliance, so make sure they are Energy Star rated.

## 8. Multi-tasking spaces

All these purpose-built spaces could quickly bloat the size of the house, which may not be possible. The "Not so Big House" movement recommends designing every space to do double duty. For example, use a Murphy bed, a fold-down table, built-in storage in a single room, instead

of a separate space for each. Even though custom-built furnishings can be expensive, they are much cheaper than extra square footage.

## 9. Breathe easy

If you want to be sure that the air in your home is healthy you can add an advanced air filter to your forced air ductwork. Nearly all homes have a filter, but some are far more robust than others. The HEPA filter is able to screen out particles as small as a virus. You can also increase the amount of outdoor air that you are bringing into your home without ruining your energy-efficiency by utilizing an Energy-recovery ventilator (ERV).

## 10. Resiliency and Technology

With increasing dependency on our electronic devices, many new homes and remodels are opting for battery back-up power. The Tesla Powerwall and other lithium-ion based options range from \$7K-50K depending on how much of your house you want to run and for how long. Most battery solutions can only support a home for a matter of hours, but that may be sufficient to get through

short power outages. Another upgrade is Cat5 or Cat6 wiring for optimal internet speeds.

## 11. Indoor/outdoor

Our home has become our sanctuary and the outdoor spaces around our home may become more even more precious. You can cover porches and add misters to make them cool in the summer, and add radiant heat or firepits to keep them comfy when it's nippy.

Bonus idea—Build a moat.

You may have become acutely aware of those home remodeling projects that you've put off. From repairs like fixing doors that don't close right, to projects such as updating your olive green kitchen or adding square footage, now is the time to start planning.

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